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Russia: Boris Kagarlitsky, Prisoner of Conscience

Monday 8 April 2024, by [LÖWY Michael](#) (Date first published: 8 April 2024).

The Daniel Singer Foundation has designated Boris Kagarlitsky as its first recipient of the “Prisoner of Conscience Award.”

Daniel Singer (1926-2000), a Jewish-Polish journalist and writer living in France, was a committed democratic socialist, and a sharp critic of Stalinism and Social-Democracy. Faithful to the ideas of Marx and Luxemburg, he retained an optimism about the prospects for socialism. The Daniel Singer Foundation, created to support initiatives in the spirit of democratic socialism, will give and award of 10 thousand dollars each year to a prisoner of conscience.

Boris Kagarlitsky, also a writer-activist, is a lifelong democratic socialist and critic of Soviet Union’s anti-socialist, anti-democratic practices, as well as the anti-democratic transition under Yeltsin and Putin, leading to the present form in Russia of a regressive and repressive oligarchic authoritarian capitalism.

Kagarlitsky is perhaps the best known Russian Marxist intellectual activist, a powerful voice for socialism and Marxism in Russia and around the world. His many books and articles have been widely translated and published, and his popular broadcasts have astutely analyzed the political economic situation in Russia. He is openly critical of Kremlin policy.

Kagarlitsky was arrested in July 2023, charged with “justifying terrorism,” and served 4.5 months in pretrial detention in the Komi Republic, more than one thousand kilometers north of Moscow. He was released in December after a two-day trial with a fine of about \$6500. The charge was clearly absurd— but was part of a generalized attack on the Russian left as a whole and Kagarlitsky’s Rabkor media outlet in particular, serving as a warning that breaking silence on the war would have dire consequences.

Boris had an unexpected appeal trial on February 13, 2024. The prosecutors succeeded in reversing the results of his two-day trial in December 2023, and whisked him from the courtroom to begin a five year sentence in a penal colony. Three days later Alexei Navalny died in mysterious circumstances in a harsh penal colony in the Arctic Circle.

Kagarlitsky is a prisoner of conscience, repressed for his public condemnation of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and critique of Kremlin policy. As the Russian Socialist Movement put it, Kagarlitsky’s arrest is “an attack on the whole Left Movement in Russia.”

Reacting to the sentencing on the prosecution’s appeal of renowned Russian sociologist and Marxist activist Boris Kagarlitsky to five years in a penal colony, on spurious charges of “justification of terrorism,” Natalia Zviagina, Amnesty International’s Director for Russia, said (February 13, 2024) : “This verdict is a blatant abuse of vague anti-terrorism legislation, weaponized to suppress dissent

and punish a government critic. By targeting Boris Kagarlitsky, a distinguished sociologist known for his critical stance against government policies, the Russian authorities are showing, once again, their relentless assault on all forms of dissent.”

Michael Lowy

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